Expenditure on Research and Development

2069. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India's expenditure on Research and Development is very meagre compared to other developing countries;

(b) whether it is a fact that the country spends about less than one percent of GDP on R&D;

(c) whether it is also a fact that there has been demand to enhance the expenditure on R&D; and

(d) if so, the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) According to the available official statistics, the expenditure on Research and Development (R&D) as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is lower compared to that in the developed countries and a few developing countries like Brazil and China, but it is higher compared to several developing countries like Argentina, Cuba, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. In absolute terms, India's R &D expenditure has increased over the years from Rs. 16198.78 crores in 2000-01 to Rs. 18000.16 crores in 2002-03. The R&D expenditure as percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the year 2002-03 was around 0.80%.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Government have been increasing the Science and Technology outlay of Scientific Departments/Agencies; from Rs. 12,022 crores in 9th Plan to Rs.25,243 crores in 10th Plan and plans to increase it further in the 11th plan. Also, various initiatives have been taken by the Government to encourage investment on R&D both in industry and institutions through several fiscal incentives and other support measures such as support in the form of grants for industrial R&D projects, support to R&D projects through sector specific programmes of various scientific and economic Ministries, income tax relief on R&D expenditure, weighted tax deduction for sponsored research, custom duty exemption on goods imported for use in Government funded R&D projects, tax holiday and national awards for outstanding R&D.

Working Conditions in Scientific Research Establishments

2070. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that lack of good research facilities and poor working conditions including low salaries in the counry's major scientific

research establishments is the major reason for fewer students opting for science courses at the college level this year;

(b) it so, the details of any corrective action Government plans to take in this regard; and

(c) the details of steps taken by Government to improve the work environment at our scientific research establishments?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) to (c) No Sir. The student's choice to take admission in various science courses is driven by other avenues available in the country. This is a cyclical phenomenon and is in response to the available employment opportunities in various other sectors. The Government have taken various corrective measures like enhanced research infrastructure in the universities for better training of students, adoption of new syllabi to match the global changes, special schemes for attracting students to science streams, etc. The salary of a scientist employed in a Government funded institute cannot be comparable to that in private funded organizations in the counry.

Science is driven by individual passion and commitment and not necessarily by monetary benefits. However, a reasonable minimum level of good research facilities and better working conditions and associated perquisites will greatly improve the present situation. The Government has doubled the funding for science and technology in the 10th Plan and the same will be further enhanced in 11th Plan.

Project for Development of Scientific Temper In Rural Areas

2071. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated any specific project aimed at developing scientific temper to fight against superstitions especially in the rural areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether as a part of such projects, Government are proposing to involve NGOs in this task; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?